IN THE ABSTRACT OF DISCLOSURE:

Please amend the Abstract as follows:

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A first area separating unit scans method of image compression includes scanning bit map data in the a main scanning direction and separates separating it into an area including black pixels and an area including no black pixel. A first encoding unit encodes encoding the area including no black pixel obtained by the first area separating unit. A second area separating unit scans, scanning the a logic row including the black pixels separated by the first area separating unit in the sub-scanning direction and separates separating it into an area including black pixels and an area including no black pixel on a column unit basis. A second encoding unit encodes, encoding the area including the black pixels which was separated by the second area separating unit and in which the number of continuous columns is equal to or more than 2. A third area separating unit separates, separating an area which coincides with a predetermined reference pattern in which the number of columns is equal to 1 from the areas which were not encoded by the second encoding unit. A third encoding unit encodes, and encoding an the area which coincides with the reference pattern and was separated by the third area separating unit.